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Letter dated 19 March 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the declaration issued on 17 March 1999 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the outcome of the trial against the four members of the "Internal Dissidence Working Group" in Havana, Cuba (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Dieter **Kastrup**
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Annex

[Original: English and French]

Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the outcome of the trial against the four members of the "Internal Dissidence Working Group" in Havana, Cuba

1. With regret, the European Union has learned the outcome of the trial against the four members of the "Internal Dissidence Working Group". According to reports, the following sentences were passed: against Mr. Vladimiro Roca Antunez, five years of imprisonment; Mr. Felix Antonio Bonne Carcasses, four years; Mr. Rene de Jesus Gomez Manzano, four years; and Ms. Marta Beatriz Roque Cabello, three and a half years.

2. This group exercised the freedom of expression, which is a universally recognized human right, and the European Union cannot accept that citizens who do so be criminalized by state authorities. At the same time, the European Union rejects judicial proceedings of a political nature. In this context, the European Union wishes to reiterate its objective in its relations with Cuba, namely to encourage a process of transition to pluralist democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as expressed in its common position of 2 December 1996.

3. The European Union deeply regrets that its repeated appeals for the unconditional release of the four members of the "Internal Dissidence Working Group" have been ignored. It wishes to recall that it has already expressed in 1998 its expectation that the four would be released when responding positively to Cuba's request for observer status at the negotiations between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific group of countries.

4. The European Union therefore repeats its calls for the prompt release of the four, and will continue to evaluate the development of this matter. The European Union notes that Cuban legislation provides for the alleviation of sentences in certain circumstances.

5. At the same time, the European Union and its member States reiterate their grave concern about the events surrounding the trial, in particular the temporary detention and house arrest of several dozen people, as well as the cutting of their telephone lines. Furthermore, the European Union wishes to express its deep disappointment that neither diplomats nor international media representatives were allowed to attend the trial, although family members of the defendants had been informed of its allegedly "public" nature.

6. Finally, the European Union is deeply concerned about certain provisions of the recent modifications of Cuba's penal legislation, which further curtail the exercise of citizens' rights.